

CASE STUDY #3: Scientific Officers on Cooperative Agreements

An extramural Program Director has been significantly involved with a cooperative agreement grant, attending monthly phone conferences and annual meetings of the PIs. The grant includes three primary institutions (with six investigators in close collaboration) plus a network of more than 50 other investigators, who use the core facilities at the primary institutions from time to time. This PD has been designated as the Scientific Officer (SO) for the grant.

A second extramural HSA has been selected to handle the program administrative (PA) responsibilities.

Should the SO recuse herself from programmatic oversight of any application submitted by the six PIs?

The answers depend on the nature of the SO's involvement with the PIs. If she has had substantial scientific involvement and is publishing with the group, she should recuse herself from handling grants from the six PIs and other coauthors on the papers. If the SO's involvement has been more of an advisory role (e.g., as the institute representative to ensure policy is followed), she need not recuse herself from handling their other applications.

Should she recuse herself from any application submitted by the primary institutions?

Even if substantially involved, the SO could serve as program administrator for other applications from the PIs' institutions, unless another conflict exists.

Should the SO recuse herself from any application submitted by the 50 other investigators or their institutions?

Unless there is another conflict, this would not be necessary.

What should the SO's role be for initial or second-level review of the cooperative agreement application?

She can not attend the closed session of study section review for the competing (T2 or 3) applications, nor the Council discussion for that application: the PA must do so. She could attend an open session of the initial review meeting, if one is held. Inasmuch as the SO would not have any involvement with the T1 application, she could attend the initial review meeting.

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